

## COMMERCE COMMITTEE

### TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF

### SEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION

### IN FAVOR OF:

#### S.B. 1 – AAC CONNECTICUT JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

#### S.B. 76 – AAC THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONNECTICUT TREASURES PROGRAM

Peter Glankoff, Executive Vice President, Sea Research Foundation

Good morning, Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, Senator Frantz, Representative Camillo, and Distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. My name is Peter Glankoff. I am Executive Vice President of Sea Research Foundation, a 501c3 non-profit organization that operates Mystic Aquarium, the Institute for Exploration, and The JASON Project and its Immersion Learning after school program. I would like to offer my support for Committee Bill No. 1, particularly Section 9 of Committee Bill No.1 which would establish a "Connecticut Treasures" program, and for Raised Bill No. 76 – An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Connecticut Treasures Program.

In general, Sea Research Foundation supports the idea of identifying locations, institutions and venues that would be considered Connecticut Treasures according to defined criteria, and leveraging those assets to the benefit of Connecticut's citizens directly and through revenue generating promotional programs that would increase awareness, visitation and patronage of these venues and their programs by Connecticut residents as well as visitors from other states and countries.

Over the years, we have spoken admiringly, even reverentially of Connecticut's rich cultural and natural heritage and its important role in the formation of this country, from pre-colonial time to the present. We have pointed to the landmarks, historic buildings and sites, museums, formal and informal learning institutions and the scenic beauty of the State's stunning coastline and countryside.

Yet somehow we have missed the mark in our attempts to wrap these assets into a clear, compelling and memorable story that people can understand, embrace, identify with and call their own. Perhaps by giving them a name like Connecticut Treasures and aligning the stories behind these treasures with the goals of economic development and cultural heritage tourism marketing, we will finally discover a deeper value – to ourselves and to our visitors -- in what we offer as a state and a citizenry.

Mystic Aquarium's initial marketing alliance with Mystic Seaport has grown into a significant, region-wide program built around a shared website and a joint ticket promotional program. This model is replicable and applicable to several markets across the state. All it takes is collaboration, creativity and communication. Necessity provides the motivation.

A recent conference entitled "Innovations in Education," co-hosted by the Connecticut Science Center and Sea Research Foundation, with a keynote by Lieutenant Governor Wyman, explored the many ways

in which informal learning institutions like ours can powerfully enhance STEM education among our elementary, middle and high school students. The Connecticut Treasures program can provide the context, incentive and structure for building linkages among the many formal and informal learning institutions across the state to supplement in-class and after school education.

Sea Research Foundation and its divisions comprise the largest informal learning network in New England. Mystic Aquarium, JASON and its Immersion Learning programs currently reach nearly 2 million students here in Connecticut and across the country annually. As such, we are prepared to lend our expertise and support to the Commissioner and Department of Economic and Community Development and the Culture and Tourism Advisory Committee to find ways of developing a model curriculum within and among locations designated as "Connecticut Treasures."

Thank you for your attention and support of this important initiative. I would be happy to respond to any questions which you might have.